DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 009 HE 023 175

AUTHOR Sunal, Cynthia Szymanski
TITLE The Role of the American University in Enhancing the Educational Effectiveness of an African University.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the 1989 Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association (Atlanta, GA, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *African Studies; *Cross Cultural Studies, Curriculum Development; Demonstration Programs; Developing Nations; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *International Educational Exchange; *International Programs; Models; Program Development; State Universities
IDENTIFIERS Africa; Bayero University (Nigeria); Nigeria; West Virginia University

ABSTRACT

The paper describes a model developed through a 4-year linkage between West Virginia University and Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. The American university saw its role as coordinating, brainstorming, and cooperatively responding to initiatives and identified needs of the African university. Program organization at the American university involved a Project Director, a U.S. University Project Coordinator, and a U.S. Coordinating Committee. The program's activities included collection and shipment of resource materials, including an Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) collection on microfiche to the African university; coordinated research projects by faculty at both institutions (including training of the Africans in microcomputer use and utilization of the research base); and curriculum development (including postdoctoral training in curriculum and instruction and development of a new course at the American university by visiting African faculty. Additional professional training included seminars offered by visiting U.S. faculty at the African University and presentation by African faculty of papers at annual meetings of professional organizations in the U.S. In addition, an African Research Forum designed to bring together faculty and graduate students from all disciplines with an interest in Africa was established at the U.S. site. (DB)

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The Role of the American University in Enhancing the Educational Effectiveness of an African University

Cyntnia Szymanski Sunal
The University of Alabama

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Paper presented at the 1989 Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia.

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Cynthia Szymanski Sunal

In a joint effort, the American University supports initiatives identified by the African University. Its role is to coordinate, brainstorm, and cooperatively respond to identified needs. This is best accomplished through a Coordinating Committee established on the U.S. campus. This was utilized in the model developed during a four year linkage between West Virginia University and Bayero University Kano, Nigeria.

Program Organization

A simple structure should be established at the U.S. university for the project. The following is suggested.

Project Director

U.S. University Project Coordinator

U.S. Coordinating Committee

Project Director. The Project Director oversees project activities and serves as a link between the universities. This individual has ultimate responsibility for project activities originating in the U.S. and for coordination with the African university.

U.S. University Project Coordinator. The Coordinator has responsibility for activities originating at the U.S. campus. These include chairing the Coordinating Committee, planning and implementing activities at the U.S. university, and orienting and preparing U.S. faculty for work at the African university.

U.S. Coordinating Committee. This Coordinating Committee works with all aspects of activities originating at the U.S. university. The committee members break down into subcommittees to handle specific activities. The Committee is where most decisions are made. Much communication in this project occurred between the U.S. university and African university committees.

Activities

Resource Materials

The collection of resource materials was deemed a priority activity for the project. For this project an Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) collection was obtained and sent to the African university. Microfiche enable an African university to acquire large amounts of information with little storage required. Professional books were also obtained from U.S. university faculty, through contact with neighboring universities and colleges, from publishers, and from school systems.

Research Efforts

Pre and posttesting of faculty members at both sites was organized and carried out by the U.S. Coordinating Committee. The testing established the effects of the project.

Coordinated research projects were undertaken jointly by faculty at both institutions. Because of the lack of reliability in computer services at the African university, training in using microcomputers to carry out research was made available to African university faculty. Additional support was provided on the U.S. campus where data were analyzed and manuscripts prepared. Visiting African university faculty used the computers and completed writing manuscripts.

Postdoctoral training provided by U.S. faculty included the utilization of the research base on effective teaching. This large research base has been synthesized during the 1980's and extended to include higher education teaching. Lecturers at the African university were introduced to this research base or were familiarized with more recent syntheses occurring with it. The posttest indicated that both greater involvement in research and greater understanding of the research base on effective teaching had led to more effective teaching, and arousing student interest in subject matter.

Curriculum Development

African Development. African university faculty members went to the U.S. university site to obtain postdoctoral training in curriculum an instruction. Graduate students were also sent to obtain doctoral degrees with support through tuition waivers and graduate assistantships.

Postdoctoral faculty members coming to the U.S. university site worked out a proposed individual program of study and research which was negotiated with the African university's Coordinating Committee. Once the program was finalized it was forwarded to the U.S. Coordinating Committee who developed plans to implement it.

U.S. Development. Visiting African faculty developed one new course at the U.S. site and planned new sections of other courses which became part of the repertoire of coursework at the U.S. university. Their involvement included both undergraduate level, they were involved in a required course. Through being involved in courses visiting African faculty had extensive interaction with U.S. faculty and students.

The curriculum efforts of visiting African faculty have also resulted in projects in public schools, such as pen pal exchanges between U.S. and African school children, the publication of curriculum articles in education journals, and workshops for university alumni.

Supporting course development activities has been the expansion of the U.S. university's library and media holdings. Visitors from the African university were asked to evaluate media relating to African topics which were subsequently added to the university's holdings. They were also asked to evaluate and submit requests for additions to the African collections in the university library system.

Professional Training

African Faculty. Several seminars were offered by visiting U.S. faculty at the African university. In addition, seminars were also offered off campus for professionals in the public sector. As further support, the U.S. university offered graduate level courses for credit at the African site. Each of these offerings was submitted to the African Coordinating Committee for comment, discussion and approval. While at the African university U.S. faculty also worked with African faculty to design research projects which were carried out both on and off campus.

While at the U.S. university site, visiting African faculty took coursework which would help them enhance their professional expertise. They received graduate credit for their work. They also attended meetings of divisional, college, and university committees. They held discussions with individuals belonging to the various committees relating to the structure of the college and university and how communication between committees and

between faculty and administration was maintained. They studied the structure of the college and university in order to determine whether there might be applications which would be useful in their own university.

While at the U.S. site, visiting African faculty members also spent time working with the Dean of the U.S. university's Continuing Education and Extension Services program. They visited sites where the university offers coursework on extension. They had in depth discussions of how the program is structured, staffed, and financed. Their investigation of the program was carried out in order to determine how a similar program might be initiated at the African site.

As much as possible, attendance by visiting African faculty at professional conferences and training courses while in the U.S. was encouraged.

U.S. Faculty. African faculty have also been involved in presenting papers at the annual meetings of professional organizations. This has extended their effect on U.S. professionals.

Among the publications which have resulted are some aimed at the general populace. These have received external funding and have been made available to the general public through sites such as public libraries.

An African Research Forum has also been established at the U.S. site. It brings together faculty and graduate students from all disciplines who have an interest in Africa.

U.S. faculty received an orientation to African topics by visiting African faculty. Their interaction concerning research, curriculum development, and instruction created wider knowledge in U.S. faculty and has led to postdoctoral studies which further increase the expertise of individuals.

Summary

The U.S. university served as both a generator of ideas and as a responder to ideas. The project resulted in the development of a good working relationship among peers from different continents. It was important to share views as much as possible. Misunderstandings did develop. Such misunderstandings are to be expected. What is more important is the continuing effort to overcome problems and build stronger working relationships.